

A  
LETTER //

UPON THE

STATE OF PARTIES:

BEING

THE FIRST OF A SERIES OF LETTERS

UPON THE

STATE OF PUBLIC AFFAIRS.

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# LETTERS

UPON THE

## STATE OF PUBLIC AFFAIRS.

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### LETTER I.

#### *Upon the State of Parties.*

DEAR SIR,

**Y**OU have done me some little wrong in imagining, from the tenor of our late correspondence and conversations, and still more from the silence which you are pleased to consider as unjust or factitious, that I am become a cold or indifferent spectator of public events. The flattery, forgive me, the partiality, you betray for my humble and unprofitable opinions, does but thinly fineer the censure you would convey against me; just as if I had abandoned some duty, or departed from some engagement, in desisting to obtrude upon the political world, a few reflections, which it is unwilling, or, perhaps, unfit to receive. Hard, indeed,

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is the case of such as me, if they can never finish or suspend their labours, without exposing themselves to these suspicions from their friends, and to worse than these from those who are not so: for if it be true, as you would insinuate, that there are some who attribute my silence to a change or repentance of those sentiments which I have delivered, I have either no consolation but in their ignorance of me, or else no choice but to write as long as I live, and put off their returning imputation from year to year, or from month to month, if they may not finally expect a fresh assurance every week or every hour of my existence.

Even you yourself, and others who entertain most kindness for me, seem to think that no important occurrence is to take place in this eventful world without a fresh declaration from me, without an act of adherence upon my part, and a new indenture and obligation. I feel so differently, my dear Sir, upon this subject, that I cannot even comply with your desire, which is so great a satisfaction to me, without protesting against the injustice upon which it is founded. For the calamities and disasters of the country, and the last great wound inflicted upon public credit, seem to me so far from affording pretexts or opportunities for changing

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ing parties or abandoning principles, that I think they have precisely brought upon us that crisis of the state, when there can be but one opinion, one duty, and one cause.

There have been moments in the present war, at which I would have permitted myself to censure the conduct of the King's Ministers in the disposal and distribution of the public force and resources: there have been others, when I wished them to attempt negotiation, even now, I could lay my finger upon what I consider as error, and as indolence; and could shew, to my own conviction at the least, a blamable inactivity and languor to which a part of the public depression and of the public cowardice seems to me not unjustly imputable. I am not so blinded by personal friendship and goodwill towards individuals, as not to perceive their mistakes and their faults too—Would to God these were times to point them out with any hope of redress or amendment—Would to God these were times to point them out with security at the least! I would not be deficient in that painful task; I would not shrink from that unpleasant duty. Let us trust they will return—those happy times, when we were Whigs and Tories, and Court and Country, or if you will, when we were Royalist and Republican, for even

these are happy by comparison: by a comparison with these guilty and degenerate days, in which we are divided only into French and British, into robbers and proprietors, into lawful and lawless men. Let us hope that we may debate once more upon *this* prerogative of the House, or *that* immunity of the people; that we may once more discuss a power or a privilege, and deliberate upon the parts and balance of our Constitution, instead of defending it altogether, and in the mass, as we are now forced to do, against the joint assaults of enemies and traitors, of "domestic malice, and foreign levies."

While we remain in this unhappy posture, straitened by the besieger, and disquieted by internal mutiny, I cannot venture to distract the Governor by censure, nor even by criticism; nor do I dare, by any means, to weaken or divide the garrison. I feel that unanimity alone can make our defence good and certain; and I know from all history and experience, that extreme dangers in every free nation have caused a temporary suspension of liberty, and given to the Executive Government an enormous accession of authority; sometimes the union of powers, and provisional exercise of the whole legislative absolute force of the state. The same examples are good only under the same pressure and necessities; but though there

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is yet, at least, no occasion to recur to this last and dangerous expedient, and to commit without restraint, or control, the safety of the commonwealth to the care of the Magistrate, still it is necessary to strengthen his hands in an extraordinary degree, and it would be with the greatest caution, that a good citizen should do any thing to weaken his authority, or diminish that upon which it is best founded, the confidence of the people. This, Sir, is my motive or excuse for the silence which I have for a long time imposed upon myself, with respect to what I cannot commend in the conduct of the war, or approve in the general administration of the Government. I do not expect perfection from any thing human, and I am willing to compound for a few practical faults in the King's servants, because I believe, and I think I know, that they have the right object in their eye, and the true principle in their bosoms.

I know this doctrine of mine is rather antiquated, and that if it has survived the new political system which has already regenerated so great a part of the world, it is only in a few callous and obstinate heads like mine, and I hope I may say, yours. In general, I find Ministers are not looked upon as men, as English gentlemen, dedicating their time and talents with great fatigue and disquiet, and no little personal danger, to the public service and for the



the common defence ; but as malignant beings, of a nature hostile or different from our own, interested in our ruin, and ever on the watch to betray or enslave us. Even the Government itself seems to be considered as a right or a property to which we have all our claim in rotation, if not at once, as joint-tenants or common occupants ; and instead of looking up to it with reverence and gratitude for the security we derive from it in our several pursuits and possessions we have been taught to look down upon it with avarice and envy, as a booty to be divided amongst us, and a common prey, of which every one who had not his share, was cheated or oppressed by the rest.

These principles are too new and fashionable to be mine and yours. They are propagated, indeed, by those, who affecting to be the equals of Tooke, and Thelwall, would feel themselves insulted or disparaged by being compared to me or you. They form, I think, the foundation stone of that impious Babel which rears itself amongst us, in hostility to law, and in defiance of Heaven. These principles, these plunderous hopes, are the secret links in the great chain of anarchy. It is these that reach from cave to cave, and from club to club, and harness every vice and every misery to the car of Faction ; that hold together the army of  
order,

disorder, and rally and recruit their broken forces from day to day, with new allies from jails and hulks, from discontent and poverty, from distress and crime.

If I could not separate my feeble help from a Government so principled, could I transfer it to an opposition so unprincipled? and if I lamented any deficiency of vigour in those who have so good a cause, could I lend strength to those who would employ their vigour in the ruin of their country: who would lead their followers to sack our capitol and found their empire upon our ashes? I will tell you, and it is no longer a paradox, it is no longer to be denied or doubted, that the present Ministry has no support so effectual and so firm as that which it has received from the opposition, or if you will, from the intemperance and fury of opposition. When I hear Mr. Fox *calculating* allegiance, and subjecting the duty and obedience of the people to the rules of a hazard table, and the chances of dice, can I think it right or expedient to curtail an estimate, or enquire into the causes of a misfortune or a mistake? When Mr. Erskine publicly invites the people to *evade* the law, and describes to them the King's servants, as "bad men conspiring," can I dare to censure the extravagance of an account, or the blunder of an office?

fice? When Mr. Horne Tooke invokes *the right  
 hand of the people*, is it a time to interpose with  
 the Government, and address the King to put  
 himself into the hands of Ministers of his chusing,  
 and in his partnership?—I confess, for one, that  
 I dare not embarrass Ministers; I dare not lend the  
 appearance of strength or right, to these men or  
 to their principles. I lament the public necessity  
 much more than they do, for they hope every  
 thing from necessity; but I lament it, because  
 from their audacity and corruptness, I dread reci-  
 procal contempt and indolence and security in Mi-  
 nisters; and I feel the want of that wise and parlia-  
 mentary control which can only belong to such a  
 Minority as men could wish, or at least bear, to see  
 in the Government, and which might be confi-  
 dered as the successor to the Government. But is  
 there any man, I ask, on either side of your House,  
 or the other, is there any reasonable man in all  
 this nation, who considers the minority in this  
 light as the next Administration? I will answer  
 this question without hesitation. There is no such  
 man. There is not a coffee-house politician, there  
 is not a village quidnunc, who considers the tri-  
 umph of Mr. Fox and his party as any thing but  
 a *revolution*; there is not an honest individual out  
 of our ten millions, if that be our number, who  
 contemplates the removal of the Ministers without  
 horror



horror and affright, because they all believe it to be equivalent to the downfall of the constitution, and synonymous with the basest perfidy, and cowardice, and submission to France. They will not look upon Mr. Fox as the *King's Minister*, but as the *Minister of France*; as an organ by which that imperious nation, not our own Sovereign, shall rule and guide us; as a "PRINCE OF PEACE," who will despoil and dishonour us for a foreign power, and send our fleets, our treasures, and our armies, to fight against our own cause, our own hopes, and, perhaps, our own country!

It is not for me to say, that this opinion of him is a just or an unjust one; I hope it is in some degree overstrained and exaggerated—it is sufficient that it is universal, and that there is danger that it may be true. For what security have we, that he will *never* be forced beyond those limits of concession to which he *now* appears ready to consent?—that he will never transgress those boundaries of treachery and meanness with which he will *now* purchase his individual greatness and ambition? What security can we have that he will be able to repress his own licentious forces, or to oppose, in any future contest, the powers of the country, if he were willing to do so, to the armies of the Republic, which he seems ready to plant for ever in the Netherlands,

lands, and to her fleets, which he will suffer to fit out opposite the mouth of the Thames?

These are points, my dear Sir, of which I propose to treat distinctly in the course of these letters, which you have exacted from me. They are only mentioned in this place, assigned to a very different discussion, because the cession of these ports and provinces seems universally considered as the first act of Mr. Fox's possible administration, and because it arises out of the question of security, to examine whether he would leave himself the *power* to be *English*, if he preserved the *disposition* to be so? To me this point appears of the greatest importance; for I confess, that if the question between him and the King's servants had been merely respecting the conduct of the war, and if his partisans had insisted that he was capable of carrying it on with more vigour and success, and therefore likely to obtain for us a better, or an earlier peace of equal advantage, there have been moments of public disappointment, and of apparent languor in the Government, when I think they would have been listened to—but since the question lies in so narrow ground that it is war with these, or with him submission, it is necessary that we should understand the extent of that spirit of submission, and know that there are terms beyond which it should

should not lead him, and at which he would retain the future *power*, as well as disposition to resist.—For it cannot be more unjust towards him to deny him this disposition, than it will be towards the nation to give up this power. For myself, if I were certain that his present ambition would not put him too much under the guidance of this spirit of concession, and that he would leave himself at the peace the means of opposing its violation; that is to say, that he would reserve in his hands the power to make another war, I might perhaps trust to his inclination. You will presently find that I can despair of nothing that is British: but I do not feel this confidence, and am not therefore authorized to connive or contribute to his power; I fear that from the connexions he has formed, and is willing to form, he might be obliged to abuse or betray it, in spite of his inclination. It would be but a poor consolation, that he should be British at the heart, while his hand obeyed the dictate of Perignon or Barthélemi? or that his sentiments should be loyal to the constitution, while he traced the sanguinary decree of Thelwall or Rowan. When he had mounted the stilts of overweening ambition, and was enthroned in power—by France or by Anarchy,—if he entertained a barren remorse, and a late unprofitable compunction, it would be but a poor consolation.

I wish



I wish therefore, I confess, to be made certain upon this head, and to be able to know at what price he would purchase peace; what he will give up to France, and what he will reserve for Great Britain; and what will be our chance of retaining that, which, by the instrument of peace, he may reserve for us? For if we have no security in our own arms and resources left us, to guard that which the peace shall leave us, I would rather surrender all at once, or at least fight till nothing shall be left to surrender. It is not a reprieve, it is not a pause, or a truce that I will consent to: we have now five hundred ships of war, and near three hundred thousand soldiers; we have now an administration hostile to France; if we are to have recourse *now* to abject and implicit submission, what are we to do when our fleets shall be laid up in harbour—when our militia and fencibles shall be disbanded—and when we shall have a French administration?

These reflections are so natural and so simple, that I am persuaded they are not new to any thinking man in the kingdom. To me they recur in my walk, and on my pillow; they are never absent from me, and they will never cease to prompt and inspire my public wishes and conduct; for all misfortunes are trivial in comparison with *foreign conquest*—all burthens are light, but a foreign yoke.

yoke. Admitting, therefore, *all* of which the enemies of Government have accused it, abuse, corruption, prodigality, whatever charges they can invent or repeat, when I put them *all* in the scale AGAINST A CONQUEROR, I think them trifling, I think them nothing—even the War itself, with its taxes and its blood, with its wrecks and its fevers—even the War weighs nothing against such a peace. To be a province of France is worse than not to be at all; an interval of slavery and dishonour is more dreadful than instant ruin. Do you think I stain my canvas, and overcharge my picture? It is not so. Let the partizans of Mr. Fox declare what claim he lays to the reins of government, but that he will proffer the conditions of such a peace?

The danger therefore of *his* administration is one of the causes of the force of *this*. The dread alone of *his* Government would unite and bind every British bosom in support of the *present*. This is the chief and master terror, not the sole one; there are domestic fears for property and order, which arise not so much from him, as from his connections, and from the nature of that force with which he strives for power. The course of this enquiry will lay open all these sources of anxiety and trepidation to the dullest eye, and the coldest bosom. I am anticipated by whatever thinks and feels.

Before

Before I come to consider our parties distinct and separate, I think it important to say a few words upon the political public itself, of which they are the component and integrant portions.

It does not appear necessary, if it were possible, to compute, as has lately been attempted, the numbers of this important class, so well called the natural representative of the people. While sometimes to have, and sometimes to think, is the qualification, who can count the tickets of admission, who can tell how many there are of either title, and how many are to be deducted from the joint number for unity of rights? It appears to me that this public is continually varying, according to the nature of events, and the pressure of circumstances. An habitual public is an indolent public, a small and idle sect of lounging politicians; necessity and danger enlarge the circle, till it takes in every condition of life, and spreads to Man himself. The succession to a crown is the concern of great families; but in a besieged city, every porter is a politician. In the "piping times of peace," politics are a science and a profession; in the exigencies of war and troubles, they are common thought, and care, and nature. In peace they are speculation: but in war, instinct: in prosperity the hope of a few, in danger the anxiety of all; in this ambition,

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in that sentiment; here prudence, or perhaps pride; there necessity, or interest at the least. To compute, therefore, these moving sands, seems to me as difficult as to fix the seas that displace or accumulate them. But without counting, we may perceive their encrease; we may observe the mass, without separating the units; and ignorant as we are of their number, we need not hesitate to pronounce, that it is greater to-day than it was yesterday, and that it will exceed to-morrow the sum-total of to-day. The corruptions of these times have filled the political tribes, and whether they are to vote by the head or by classes, is the question that involves the safety of the state.

I need not recommend to your consideration the importance of this new occurrence: we have, in fact, a *new public*, before and by means of which our parties contend and dispute for power. Now though the cause were the same, it would be of some consequence to have changed the judge and the tribunal. The Government of Rome was overturned, when her factions called in the scum and dregs of Italy to vote in the Comitia. It was a *new public* that gave away her liberty, and enthroned Marius, and Sylla, and Cæsar, on the ruins of the constitution. What Rome suffered in her elections, we are openly threatened with in ours; and in our natural representative

representative our political public are actually suffering—we have suffered opinion to be corrupted and depraved a thousand ways, and we permit those to vote, and their vote to sway and govern, who, in any other part or period of the world, would have been deprived of the quality of citizen, for personal immorality, and private brands.

This political public, thus reinforced and augmented, is to be divided, in very unequal proportions indeed, but into three parties, of the most opposite qualities and composition. I propose to consider them separately in this place, so as to ascertain their several pretensions to confidence, without a particular examination of their views or principles, the chief of which I reserve for future and distinct discussion.

I apprehend there is a party who would not offer or receive terms of peace with France upon any conditions short of the restoration of the monarchy, the catholic religion, and the Emigrants.

There is another that is desirous of purchasing peace immediately, at the expence of any concessions, and by the desertion of the Emperor, and the surrender of the Netherlands, in particular.

I own, I am happy, that neither of these possesses sufficient credit to be able to give effect to their several plans, and that the third party, which lies between both of these extremes, is that which is predominant in parliament, and efficient in the conduct of public affairs. But it is not, my dear Sir, because it is the most moderate, and, therefore, the natural refuge of all those who might hesitate between the alternatives which the others offered to them, that I commend, or that I adhere to it, but because I think it is that which alone, out of the three, considers our real interest, or our actual position. When Mr. Burke invites me to his crusade, with that eloquence which has no rival, and that zeal which outstrips even itself, I assent only while I listen to him; I know not how it happens, but when the charm of his voice ceases, my concurrence stops with it. He leaves no impression, I think, and certainly no conviction, for he neither proves to me the probability of succeeding, nor, shall I own it to you, the interest in success! When Mr. Fox belies, or slanders the country, I listen with impatience, I scarce can listen; and when he represents us as aggressors in the war, or as bankrupts in public faith, or as defeated and incapable of reducing our enemy to just and adequate conditions of peace, my heart and my understanding, repel the libel; and when he counsels to

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abandon to France all that she may desire to occupy, I cannot perceive, in the circumstances of either country, that necessity which could alone render his advice any thing but treachery or madness. From both of these, therefore, I turn, equally dissatisfied and unconvinced, though not with equal disgust and aversion; yet I would ask of those, whose fastidious ears cannot hear the very whispers of peace, who encourage their country to persevere so nobly in an eternal internecine war with France, till they shall replace the monarch on his throne, and the host on the altars.—I would ask, what hope they entertain of rousing, by their eloquence, a sluggish people, deaf to all the cries of honour, interest, and duty? Let them throw their eyes at home, and tell me what high thoughts, what generous desires, what honourable spirit they discover? Let them shew me the funds that they rely upon, of public virtue, of disinterestedness, of self-devotedness, amongst our people, or our wealthy merchants, or our wealthy nobility if they please, or, if they please our wealthy clergy? Why was the Bank besieged when a handful of felons landed in Pembroke-shire? Why was the specie of the realm pumped out of circulation, to be hidden in cellars, or buried in the earth, when there was but a threat of invasion? What superfluous valour do they find amongst us? What virtues of supererogation, that

that we should spend them in a foreign cause? Are they sure that we possess more energy, and zeal, and patriotism, than are necessary to the defence of our own throne, of our own churches, of our own soil—they who would persuade Mr. Pitt to assume a task, at which his father would have trembled when we were Britons?

Let us not deceive ourselves, the very name of country has disappeared from the midst of us; that name, so dear, so tender, and so powerful, sleeps in our ears. Hypocrisy blushes to pronounce it; credulity listens to it no more; it seems fraud, and sounds declamation. Commerce has done its perfect work; it has withdrawn our eyes from every general public care, from every generous manly thought, to our ledgers and our day-books---we are a nation of tills and counters, not of states and provinces! a cold, callous, calculating race, whose plodding head looks down and mocks our heart, who reason ourselves out of honour, out of patriotism, out of every great propensity of our soul. If our funds fall a sixteenth, this war of religion, principle, necessity, becomes a ministerial trick, or a crusade of kings; for half a crown in an hundred pounds, we abandon our laws, our altars, our independence, and our fields; upon all this globe of earth we discern no speck but the Stock-Exchange,

change : we tremble for no generous nation : no unhappy confederate ; we throw our eyes not to the temple where we worship, or the place where we were born, but to the Stock-Exchange.---Has Jourdan passed the Rhine ? thank heaven, stocks rise--Does he approach the Danube ? thank heaven still ; he **will** dictate peace to the emperor in Vienna, and stocks will rise still higher.---What is it to us, if rape and murder prowl through the provinces of Germany ?---What, if desolating fires, and military massacres destroy the villages and the peasantry ?--What, if universal conquest subject all mankind to the French vandal, and set his obscene dominion on the neck of all the human race ? the stocks rise.---But, if a naked band of miserable wretches, disembarked by force in the Welch mountains, and prisoners of the peasantry, bring the shade of danger to ourselves, Oh ! it is another thing ; draw a line round the bank, overwhelm the public credit, and steal the palladium of our country !

With a people like this, is it not enough if we can stem the torrent of brave and hardy villany that inundates the earth ? if we can defend our own shores, without taking the cross for foreigners, and priests ? if we can protect our own Sovereign and our own altars, or what we value more, our scrip and our annuities ?

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Of this party I shall have much to say in another place. It is respectable from abilities, it is formidable from zeal, and, I believe, that it is venerable from sentiment and virtue---but it is unpliant and impracticable, and its principles are rigorous, abstracted, and extreme. It seems to me to be leagued with the French Emigrants, or rather to be their dupe in the design of perplexing the Government, and preventing the return of peace altogether. I regret the existence of this party, however, more as a diminution and loss of "those that should be ours," than as any accession of force to our enemy, or any fortress for him to fly to. The truth is that I do not distinguish, what they seriously desire, intend, or hope, by their conduct, under the actual circumstances, nor have I any power to discover the scope and object of their general design, unless, indeed, it be that they despair altogether of the present age, and aspire only to vindicate their own foresight, and their own virtue to posterity---as if they were sure that posterity were to read, and think, and love virtue, and admire talents---doubtless, they will be read while men can read, and admired by taste and sentiment, as long as they survive; while judgment will lament to think how little they have ever profited the cause they love, and the country they adorn!

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Yet, Sir, I cannot conceal from you, that these are the men, whom, I think, posterity will be the last to absolve, or at least, that it will accept their present efforts, more as remorse than virtue, as reparation rather than desert. We have heard a great deal of the effects which were produced by American intercourse and American success, in creating or accelerating the *French Revolution*; but there is, I think, a sort of conventional silence upon the influence which those circumstances, together with the principles and doctrines by which they were matured or accompanied, have had upon our own sentiments, our own politics, and our own morals. Those, who can trace the hand of heaven in the punishment of France, and read in the fate of Louis XVI. a just and visible retribution for the encouragement he gave to rebellious America, and the Republic that he planted in another hemisphere, are conveniently blind to the same sources of our own dangers, our own troubles, and our own crimes! They, who rejoiced in our defeats, who deplored and deprecated our successes in that war, who gave thanks for the captivity of our armies, who publicly called down victory to the standards of our enemies, and finally discouraged and dispirited us into the peace of 1782, can perceive nothing in their own doctrines and speeches, calculated to wean the people from their attachment to the Government,

vernment, nothing to distract or alienate the loyalty of the public mind, nothing to impair the vigour and sentiment of the nation, or to diminish our affection and gratitude, superstition if you will, for our country!

I thank God I was not of an age to mix in the politics of those times---that I did not imbibe that base contagion---that I am pure of those pernicious spots. Whoever they were, I will not name them, they need not to be named, that poisoned our virtues in the source; that nipped our spirit in the bud; that taught us first the vile philosophy of being any thing but British; of wishing any thing but triumph to our country; of feeling a separate wish and a separate interest; of affecting any wisdom or any generosity, or any justice hostile to England—Whoever they were, they are the first jacobins; they are the authors of the first schism, and the inventors of the first heresies. But is it these, these self-same self-forgetting men, who now attempt to rouse us from the lethargy into which they have plunged us, to redeem us from their own curse, to cure us of their own leprosy, to dry up the wounds their own hands have made? Do they think there is this virtue in the handle of their spear? or do they forget the part they acted in  
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that unhappy war ; who, under a new form, and as it were, a new existence, would seem patriots and philosophers, and Englishmen in this ?

Mr. Fox, I acknowledge, is more consistent and uniform ; between his conduct in those unfortunate times, and his modern practise, there is no variation but in violence and degree. The remnant of his party that adhere to him need not blush for the inconsistency of the great master. He exulted then, and exults now in the same cause. To extol the foe and calumniate his country ; to found his claim to power upon domestic calamities, and the favour of the enemy, were the first acts and specimen of his career. Such is the genius of his politics, and such the character of his public life. To vilify and insult the Parliament, to flatter and cajole the populace, to be loved by bad men, and be uncontrolled by good ones ; to have no principle but ambition, no scruple in his means, and no remorse in his objects, are his promises to his followers, and the bands of his friendships. I am going to make a confession to you of an extraordinary nature. I am not one of those who approved of the coalition with the Duke of Portland and his friends ; had my advice been of consequence to be hearkened to, it would never have taken place. I will  
not

not now speak of all the disadvantages which I think it has brought to the King's service, because I do not think it a time to point out defects or weakness in the Government; I mention it here, because when it did take place, and did not comprise Mr. Fox and his personal followers, that party became far more dangerous than while it was restrained by a weight and authority of character and property, which appeared to me a superfluous accession to the Government, and a fatal privation to the minority. Since that time, Sir, the Government has been encumbered upon one hand by its own power, and the opposition has become desperate on the other from its insignificance; the want of a counterpoise has been felt in the House of Commons, and the acts of the Legislature have scarce been distinguished from the will of the Executive Power. From regarding opposition with contempt, it was an easy step to consider Ministers with apprehension; from despising those, men came to suspect these; nor is it a happy feeling for those who know and value liberty in the Constitution of their country; it is not, I am persuaded, a subject of pleasing reflection to you; and to me, I confess, it is the cause of many painful thoughts, that I can find no where within the walls of either House, no where within the pale of the Constitution,

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tution, that salutary check and control upon Government, which has for a century, at least, existed in a minority of Members of Parliament. I do not like the omnipotence of the Government; I do not like to have no security for the Constitution of England, but my personal good opinion or even experience of Ministers. Never yet, I think, was so great authority abused so little; never yet did an absolute Privy Council conform so truly to the spirit of liberty; let us thank God it is so, and pray that so it may continue. So I trust it will, and that the use may be always British of this un-British power. I believe it will be so—But I have not been so brought up, nor have I so formed and educated my own mind, as to accept of this confidence of mine as an equivalent for that security which I remember and desire in the Constitution itself; I lament the pressure and necessity of the times, when it is to the virtue of Kings and Ministers that we must look for the sanctity of the public laws, and the life of the public liberty. I deplore the cruel dilemma into which every day may plunge us, and the dreadful alternative which alone remains to us, if we were to have less reason to think favorably of the persons in power, or of the use they make of it.

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Is there no case then, I hear you ask me, in which I would consent to act or vote with Mr. Fox and his minority? Is there no supposable event in which men of honour might transfer their wishes and assistance to him and his party? I answer you, there is none---none which either I or you could bear to look upon? is Mr. Fox then so black, so jacobin, so sold to evil, that I could have no trust, no reliance, no hope of any term or period to the mischiefs he would let loose upon his country? I have not this opinion of Mr. Fox; a man, admirable for extraordinary talents, and as I believe, estimable for many virtues. But his morals are too pliable, at least I think so, and his politics audacious. I consider him as under the dominion of bad citizens, and the apparent leader only of a criminal faction, both too strong and too wicked for him to restrain, or long to preside over. I consider him so far from jacobin, that I think him aristocratical in its best and noblest sense, the desire of fame and pursuit of excellence; I think him aristocratical by birth, by talents, by virtues, even by habit. He can imitate the voice only of jacobinism. His palm is smooth, his hand is not against every man. But he has dared to promote, and protect and encourage jacobinism, as an engine of state, and a lever of his ambition. Irritated by disap-

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pointment, and what he feels, perhaps, as personal injury, or personal insult, he has abjured principles, and adopted principles, as he found most convenient to his momentary fury, or to the exigency of the moment; he has abandoned the connections as well as the principles which could have restrained and confined him, and united himself with men of infamous characters and revolutionary principles, as he could best gratify the spleen, envy, or malice of the moment. He is not jacobin, but he has applied a new power, and added a new wheel to faction; he has called in aid of his despair, allies and voters into the political public, not like former factions, from the discontented of the political profession, not from the doubtful of the natural representative; but from all discontent, natural, moral, and political. Have we not seen him on the Hustings, flattering and caressing felons; acquitted if you will, but not acquitted of the fact for which they were tried, but only of the degree of criminality which was charged as attaching upon that fact? Conspirators, though not defined by Edward the Third, and traitors, not within the statutes of Treason. Had these men been tried for sedition, or for misprision of treason, does any man entertain a doubt but that they would have been convicted? and if they were snatched from justice

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by the mistaken rigour of the crown lawyers, or the mistaken tenderness, as some will have it, of the juries, does it lessen their moral guilt or infamy? I am disgusted, Sir—I am terrified, when I behold Mr. Fox endeavouring to deceive and outwit this mass of villany; when I see him scheming to climb by it into power, and after, kick away his ladder.—I scarce can help pitying the weakness of his self-love, and the infirmity of his vanity, when he thinks he can scale the treasury windows upon their shoulders, or burst the cabinet doors with their pikes and clubs, and then dismiss them to their homes thanked and contented, without the plunder of the public and the blood of the prince!

This consideration leads me naturally to examine that great division of the public, which you and I have heard with equal pain, computed as a fifth part of the whole, and denounced as incorrigible. I confess this is very different from my own opinion, I cannot concur in that statement of the forces and numbers of the disaffected, nor in the degree or parity of their wickedness. I cannot be induced by the sickly and jaundiced fears of any one, however I may otherwise respect or love him, without evidence, without documents, without any criterion of truth, to proscribe at once immense classes of citizens, to cut off at once eighty thousand Englishmen,



men, as incapable of amendment, as reprobate and outcast from society, as irreclaimable, as *feræ naturâ*, as beasts of prey themselves, and to be snared and hunted down by us, the proprietors of the soil! I cannot compute guilt by figures of oratory, nor by figures of arithmetic: I cannot count and fold men into pens of proscription and political leprosy; I cannot cut off the communion of the human race for rumours and conjecture. I do not believe their force; I do not believe their number; I do not fear their abilities; I do not dread their total absolute depravity. I despair of nothing that is British. True jacobinism is not the growth of our soil, it is not natural, it will not graft well upon our stock, it will not shoot so rank nor bear so fruitful; it is French by birth and nature, and it shrivels upon our ground as our bull dog and our game-cock degenerate upon theirs. The jacobinism of this country has never, that I know of, been well explained; it is not, as has been said, a conspiracy of talents against property, for talents do not conspire, they are in a perpetual collision and competition which forbid monopoly and even concert; nor is it, I should think, capable of being compressed into one happy sentence or comprised in one glowing period. It appears to me that the definition nearest to the truth would lay it down as the whole mass and body corporate  
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of the national depravity, the given quantity of all manner of vice and wickedness in the empire, having received a political stamp and direction; the aggregate of the public crimes and corruption impressed and impelled by party, and qualified to vote and to be active citizens in the state.

Real jacobinism seems to be a quality wanting in our composition, a globule deficient in our blood, and its absence from amongst us, is not the least prominent feature in our apparent unfitness, or at least unripeness for revolutions. Our parties had long declined, their nature had become corrupted and depraved, and even their corruption and depravity had undergone a change, or arrived at least at a new extreme of foulness and deformity; if they had *found* jacobinism all had been over; fortunately they were obliged to create, or rather to supply it, from the body of general wickedness, and the mass of common depravity. These instruments had always existed in the state, but they had hitherto been rejected by the scruples of the worst times and the morality of the holdest politicians. To these, for want of the true nature of jacobinism, opposition was forced to apply, and a better substitute or expedient for their purposes, I am compelled in candour to acknowledge the wit of man, could not have suggested. Since that period—Party,  
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impregnating every species of corruption, wretchedness, and depravity, is the real novelty, and the real danger of our situation.—Party, calling to its assistance the renegades of religion, the public enemies of law, the refuse of jails, the whole mass of individual wickedness—Party, recruiting in hulks and prisons, from debt and crime, from discontent, misfortune, poverty, merited or unmerited, from natural hardships, from casual misery, from the inevitable disparity of human conditions—Party, throwing wide its portals to audacious guilt, to criminal speculation, to avowed hostility, to treasonous innovation, to armed complaint—Party, calculating duty, allegiance, and pious love of the constitution, by the means of resistance, by the hope of revolt, by the chance of revolution—Party, publicly inviting men to evade the law, when after a nice computation it has concluded not to resist it—Party, opening its arms, and communicating its orgies with intoxicated traitors and obscene conspirators—Party, “offering its sword to the populace”—Party, provoking mutiny in the army, and in the people murder, by lapithean toasts, and in clubs of centaurs—Party, calling out for “the soldier in the ranks” and for “the right hand of the people.”—This is the novelty, this is the danger, this is the form that disgusts and affrights and confounds us.—It is not the crimes nor the audacity  
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of those whom we call Jacobins, but the political direction given to their crimes and audacity that is new and alarming: it is not that there are eighty-thousand villains, (which I do not think) amongst us, but that whatever there is of villany should be inspirited and directed from on high, by great statesmen, by distinguished lawyers, by enlightened ambition, by experienced wisdom—this is our danger: It is the *new public* admitted to sit and vote against law and government and religion: It is the new tribunal, the new jury, before whom we try the eternal cause of law and property against anarchy and thieves. It is the judge that has changed and not the plea, and not the parties: for it is interwoven in the tissue of humanity, it is one of the threads of fate that they should contend, and strive for the mastery for ever.

Under different forms, in different forms and stages of society, we see the eternal strife and exhaustless struggle; but it has arisen out of the excess and refinements of ease and luxury, and out of the well-being of man himself, in society, (as all extremes are dangerous and limitrophe to the most opposite ill) that those who are elsewhere the matter and subject of laws, should here have become interpreters and censors of the laws: that robbers who have passed half

their lives in eluding the police, should conspire against the state; that thieves who know no more of the empire or the constitution than the purlieus of Bow-street, and the flaws in their indictment, should plot, or harangue, or petition, or vote in conventions, or for conventions; for republics, or for any law or any government whatsoever; that those who have escaped, and scarce escaped the justice of the law, should pretend to legislate, and openly demand a change in the law and constitution of the country—and what change? a change, no doubt, in favour of crimes and criminals; else they would never demand it.—This then is the novelty; not that robbers and felons should exist, or be enemies to laws invented for their restraint and for their punishment, (for this they have always done and always been), but that they should be received and admitted into the political public, by the candidates for public trust and power, and for the administration of these very laws, which they have violated, and which they have escaped, and which they openly conspire to abrogate and repeal.—That they should attack these laws, not in the dark, not in the twilight (the friend of theft) but in the noon-day, but in the market; not in detail, not by evasion, but in the mass, and publicly; not that there should be cheats and pickpockets, but that cheats and pickpockets should

should become political personages, and decide on peace and war, and laws and constitutions; not that they should lurk in public shows and processions to do their ministry, but that they should brave the processions of the prince, and dare at parricide and rebellion; not that they should ply their art in paltry pilferings and petty-larcenies! but that they should plunge "the right hand of the people" in blood and regicides.—It is this confusion of society, it is this confusion of class and crime, it is this revolution in vice and wickedness themselves, that is new and that is hideous to look upon.—It is this anarchy, this inverted series, this inverse hierarchy of crimes themselves, of crimes the new allies and instruments of British party, and of parliamentary opposition! Contemplate their means, their hopes, their chances, their despair! see how all the little streams of villany fall into the great river of rebellion; see how the highways, how the obscene allies contribute their aids to faction and revolt; how opposition migrated from parliaments to fields and cellars, marshals the army of disorder; behold its figure and array, its wings and van, its rear and baggage, its artillery and reserve.

This then is the species of our jacobinism, and the dangerous error, as well as unutterable wickedness



wickedness of what was party.—But bad and base and abominable as it is, it is not a new creation but a new alliance, it is a compound and fermentation, not an element or nature of evil. Far different is the jacobinism of France; there it is native, original, local, and peculiar; there it springs, and grows, and flourishes from a perennial source, and with a consenting sky; their genial wickedness, their happy atheism, their lusty pillage, their vigorous homicide, despised our puny clubs and correspondents from the beginning: and still more at the end, our hesitating statesmen, speculating in jacobinism, and coquetting with revolution. They saw clearly we did not love villany, that we toiled and fretted in infamy, that we abandoned virtue rather than embraced vice, that we treated and compounded with our conscience, and left a postern (a dark and subterraneous one indeed, but still a postern) for honesty and honour. We had terms and boundaries of wrong, it was not our path but our eccentricity; we were clay to their metal. The jacobin-born, derided and despised his brother of adoption; he laughed at our half-bred monster, who would stop at Hounslow or at Windsor, at regicide or sacrilege, at age or sex, who would stop any where or at any thing. He knows that jacobinism is not a profession nor an art, nor a character, nor a mode, nor a covenant; that

that it is element, species, nature, genius, instinct, fate; the dominion and pre-eminence of ill, the hate of virtue, the antipathy of moral beauty, order, happiness. He knows that he is the mind's negro, and mocks our copper-coloured creole villany, our mule and mungrel wickedness; nor will he accept of mixture and infusion, of quality and compound, for the pure, genuine, deep, dark, colourless, substantial, natural evil, he breathes, and thinks, and is.

It will not be said, I trust, that I am making the apology of the worst, if not of men, of Britons. Though I think it better to pour oil upon this troublous sea than to confound the elements with our trident, or break open the cave where the winds repose; yet I cannot forbear, in this place, where I have endeavoured to point out the injustice of numbering men, and classing them together, and proscribing them together as reprobate and irreclaimable, to defend myself upon that point. Amongst those who have justly been objects of the state's vigilance, there are, doubtless, degrees and variations of delinquency; many have gone farther than they intended, and having paused and thought, *are* reclaimed; many have been undeceived only by late and terrible example; to some, reflection; to some, experiment; to some, time

time has been useful; the laws have restrained others; the rejection of their principles by France, the worst of them; the despair of succeeding, all. But while thus I except and intercede for these classes of mistaken, and those of guilty citizens, I confess that I have no words, or words no power, to express my contempt and hatred, and abhorrence of those who are still their mis-leaders. I do not dread their abilities, I have no respect for their judgment, I do not think peace an evil because their enlightened malice desires it, nor do I know or care whether they wish for peace to disturb it, or for war to render peace such as they wish it; I despise their policy as much as I hate their crimes; I think our Government and our laws are able to defeat the one and to restrain the other. I despair of nothing---and though I think it a misfortune to breathe the same air, and to walk the same earth with them; yet I do not fear (much less do I anticipate their favour) to breathe by their permission, to walk at large by their lenity, and to exist by their connivance. I despise their threats, and defy a power they will never have, and a mercy they would never shew,

In one of the stages of the Revolution in France they cried out at their elections to their candidates on their hustings, "What have you done for which you would be hanged or broke upon the wheel in  
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case the monarchy were to be restored?" Which was as much as to say, "Whom have you denounced or assassinated? Shew us the blood upon your hands, bring to us the carcase of a priest or a royalist, and you will then be fit for our delegation, you will then be worthy to bear our character, and to be deputed as our proxy to the great national representation of iniquity."---Now, if we, who are still in our farms, or our houses, were to ask, in our turn, of those who demand our confidence, or pretend to direct and guide our public councils, and to influence our votes or our conduct---"What have you done, for which, in case of a revolution, you would be carried to the lamp-iron, or to the guillotine? What virtue have you to convict, what property to betray you? What have you ever said, written, or done, for which the committees of Horne Tooke, or the emissaries of Thelwell would hang, or drown, or tear you to pieces with grape shot?" Is it not happy that we can say to so many of our richest towns and fertile provinces, you have raised fencibles, you have paid bounties, you have presented addresses, you have entitled your municipality, by various measures and declarations, to be plowed down by some actor in revolutions, you have shewn cause why your department should be put under military law, and pronounced in a state of siege! This is no small or contemptible  
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feature in the state of the country, and is as great in pledge as the force we have raised, or the loyalty we have published; and surely it is high time for every man, and every corporation, to make out their title to the full vengeance of the convention or the revolutionary government, or of Horne Tooke, or the Directory, which is ever to be foremost in that fortunate career which they think so open to us. For my part, I cannot conceive how any man can love a life that Thelwall or Tooke would leave him; and even while I write, I feel a pleasure in thinking that I should be proscribed by those who have proscribed whatever is virtuous, whatever is estimable for any cause, and that I could not, if I would, survive my friends, my family, or my country!

I have the honour to be, &c.

LONDON,  
March 25th, 1797.

